

MORALS OF THE AZTECS.

A Mexican Mother's Advice to Her Daughter.

SUPERIORITY OF THE RACE.

Striking Resemblance Among the Aztecs to the Old Hebrew Code of Morals.

(Correspondence of THE HERALD.)

CITY OF MEXICO, NOV. 14th, 1884.

In looking over the *Historia de Nueva España*, my attention was forcibly struck by the following "Advice of an Aztec Mother to her Daughter," and there appeared so much excellence in it, that I thought I would translate it and send it to you. It is interesting as showing the high notions of morality which the Aztecs found existing in this country and the rules of conduct laid down. I think would have done justice to a Chesterfield himself. A significant peculiarity is the fact that the Aztecs held to the same law of punishment for adultery, namely, stoning to death, as the ancient Jews:

"My beloved daughter, very dear little dove, you have already heard and attended to the words which your father has told you. They are precious words and such as are rarely spoken or listened to, and which have proceeded from the bowels and heart in which they were treasured up; and your beloved father well knows that you are his daughter, begotten of him, are his blood and his flesh; and God our Lord knows that it is so. Although you are a woman and are the image of your father, what more can I say to you than has already been said? What more can you hear than what you have heard from your lord and father, who has fully told you what is becoming for you to do and to avoid; nor is there anything remaining, which concerns you, that he has not touched upon. Nevertheless, that I may do towards you my whole duty, I will say to you some few words. The first thing that I earnestly charge upon you is that you observe and do not forget what your father has now told you, since it is very precious. Persons of his condition rarely publish such things, for they are the words which belong to the noble and wise—valuable as rich jewels. See, then, that you take them and lay them up in your life; with these same words will you teach your sons and daughters, if God shall give you them. The second thing that I desire to say to you is that I love you much, that you are my dear daughter. Remember that of me; you were born and that you were brought up in my arms. I placed you in your cradle and in my lap and with my milk I nursed you. This I tell you in order that you may know that I and your father are the source of your being. It is we who now instruct you. See that you receive our words, and treasure them in your breast. Take care that your garments are such as are decent and proper; observe that you do not adorn yourself with much finery, since this is a mark of vanity and of folly. As little becoming is it, that your dress should be very mean, dirty, or ragged; since rags are a mark of the low, and of those who are held in contempt. Let your clothes be becoming and neat, that you may neither appear fantastic nor mean. When you speak do not hurry your words from uneasiness, but speak deliberately and calmly. Do not raise your voice very high, nor speak very low, but in a moderate tone. Neither mince when you speak, nor when you salute, nor speak through your nose, but let your words be proper, of a good sound, and your voice gentle. Do not be nice in the choice of your words. In walking, my daughter, see that you behave becomingly, neither going with haste, nor too slowly; since it is an evidence of being puffed up, to walk too slowly, and walking hastily causes a vicious habit of restlessness and instability. Therefore neither walk very fast nor very slow; yet, when it shall be necessary to go with haste, do so—in this use your own discretion, and when you may be obliged to step over a pool of water, do it with decency that you may neither appear clumsy nor light. When you are in the street, do not carry your head much inclined or your body bent; nor as little go with your head very much raised, since it is a mark of ill breeding; walk erect and with your head slightly inclined. Do not have your mouth covered, or your face, from shame, nor go looking like a nearsighted person, nor, on your way, make fantastic movements with your feet. Walk through the street quietly, and with propriety. Another thing that you must attend to, my daughter, is that when you are in the street, you do not go looking hither and thither, nor turning your head to look at this and that; walk neither looking at the skies, nor on the ground. Do not look upon those whom you meet with eyes of an offended person, nor have the appearance of being uneasy, but of one who looks upon all with a serene countenance; doing this you will give no one an occasion of being offended with you. Show a becoming countenance, that you may neither appear morose nor, on the other hand, too complaisant. See, my daughter, that you give yourself no concern about the words you may hear in going through the street, nor pay any regard to them, let those who come and go say what they will. Take care that you neither answer nor speak, but act as if you neither heard nor understood them; since, doing in this manner, no one will be able to say with truth that you have said anything amiss. See likewise, my daughter, that you never paint your face, or stain it or your lips with colors in order to appear well, since this is a mark of a vile and unchaste woman. Paints and coloring are things which bad women use—the immodest, who have lost all shame and even sense, who are like fools and drunkards and are called rascals (prostitutes). But that your husband may not dislike you, adorn yourself, wash yourself and cleanse your clothes and let this be done with moderation, since, if every day you wash yourself and your clothes, it will be said of you that you are over nice—too delicate; they will call you to temptation *financiera*. My daughter, this is the course you are to take, since in this manner the ancestors from whom you spring were brought up. Those noble and venerable dames, your grandmothers, told us not so many things as I have told you—they said but few words, and spoke thus:

"Listen, my daughter, in this world

it is necessary to live with much prudence and circumspection. Hear this allusion which I shall tell you and preserve it and take from it a warning and example from living aright. Here in this world we travel by a very narrow, steep, and dangerous road which is as a lofty mountain ridge, on whose top passes a narrow path, on either side is a great gulf without bottom, and if you deviate from the path, you will fall into it. There is need, therefore, of much discretion in pursuing the road." My tenderly loved daughter, my little dove, keep this illustration in your heart and see that you don't forget it—it will be to you as a lamp and a beacon, so long as you shall live in this world. Only one thing remains to be said and I have done. If God shall give you life, if you shall continue some years upon the earth, see that you guard yourself carefully that no stain come upon you; should you forfeit your chastity you will never be fortunate, nor have true love. When it shall please God that you receive a husband, and you are placed under his authority, be free from arrogance, see that you don't neglect him, nor allow your heart to be in opposition to him. Be not disrespectful to him. Beware that in no time or place you commit the treason against him, called adultery. See that you give no favor to another, since this, my dear and much-loved daughter, is to fall into a pit without bottom from which there will be no escape. According to the custom of the world, if it should be known, for this crime they will kill you; they will throw you into the street for an example to all the people, where your head will be crushed and dragged upon the ground. Of these says a proverb: "You will be stoned and dragged upon the earth and others will take warning at your death." From this will arise a stain and dishonor upon our ancestors, the nobles and senators from whom we are descended. You will tarnish their illustrious fame and their glory by the filthiness and impurity of your sin. You will, likewise, lose your reputation, your nobility, and your honor of birth. Your name will be forgotten and abhorred. Of you will it be said that you were buried in the dust of your sins. And remember, my daughter, that though no man shall see you, nor your husband ever know what happens, God, who is in every place, sees you and will be angry with you and will be avenged upon you as he shall see fit. By his command you shall either be maimed, or struck blind, or your body will wither, or you will come to extreme poverty for daring to injure your husband. Or perhaps he will give you to death and put you under his feet, sending you to the place of torment. Our Lord is compassionate, but if you commit treason against your husband, God, who is everywhere, shall take vengeance on your sin, and will permit you to have neither contentment, nor repose, nor a peaceful life; and he will excite your husband to be always unkind towards you, and always to speak to you with anger. My dear daughter, whom I tenderly love, see that you live in the world in peace, tranquility and contentment all the days that you shall live, see that you disgrace not yourself, that you stain not your honor, nor pollute the luster and fame of your ancestors. See that you honor me and your father, and reflect glory on us by your good life. May God prosper you, my first born, and may you come to God who is in every place.

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